

GREEK ELECTIONS JUNE 2012

GREEK
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First thoughts on the 17 June 2012 election in Greece

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Edited by Roman Gerodimos

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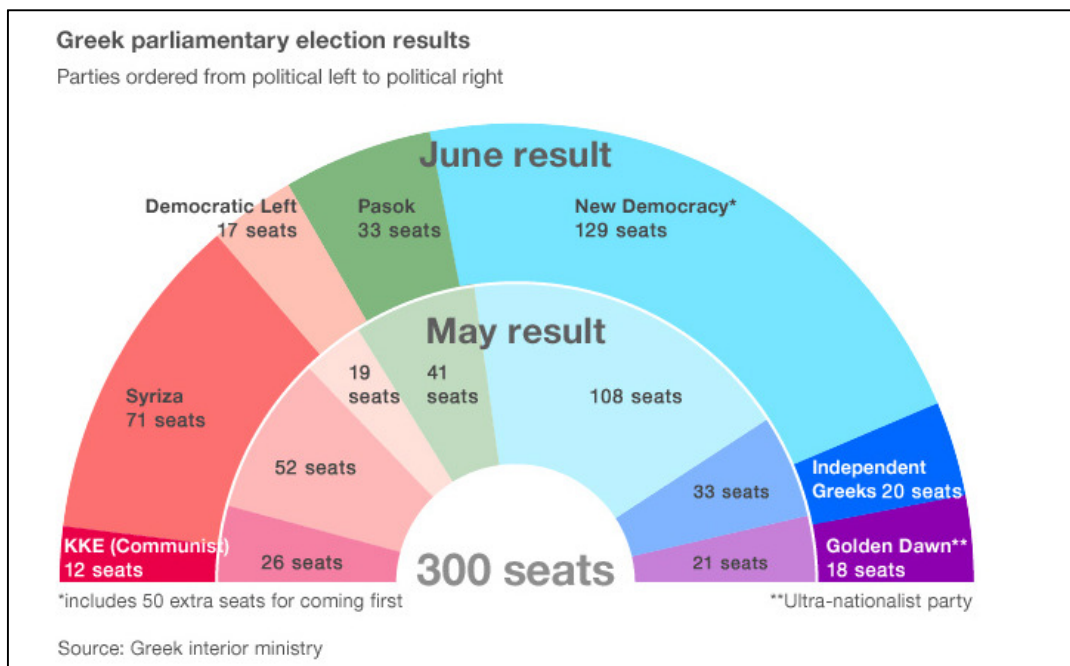
Editorial

The 17 June 2012 election in Greece confirmed many of the trends and patterns identified following May's election – fragmentation, disaffection, extremism, fear and anger. After shattering the political system to smithereens in May, it seems that the Greek electorate decided to try and glue the pieces back together. The polarisation of the electorate between the pro-Euro and the anti-memorandum camps did put pressure on smaller parties and, in particular, on the overall share of small parties not crossing the parliamentary threshold of 3%. However, it is quite clear that, while highly polarised, the political system cannot just go back to the *status quo ante*. One of the two pillars of the contemporary party system (Pasok) has imploded while the other (New Democracy) is struggling to cope with pressures from above and below. A party of the radical left (Syriza) got its highest share in history and came close to winning an election, far surpassing EDA's success in 1958. Extremism is here to stay with the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn maintaining its share of the vote despite being implicated in highly visible incidents of violence. And while Greece is struggling to balance its commitments to its lenders with soaring unemployment, crime and social malaise, political leaders are facing the need for a shift to a new political culture of coalition governments and power-sharing.

Following the success of our first Pamphlet, published just days after the May 6th election, the Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG) is delighted to host a second collection of short commentaries on the June election. Our contributors consider the implications of the electoral result for the political parties, the political system and Greek society in general. The emergence of new social cleavages (along the pro-Euro / anti-Memorandum axis, as well as age, professional background, locality and professional background) and the continued success of extremist parties pose significant challenges for political scientists and practitioners alike. As with the May edition, this pamphlet is by no means a comprehensive, detailed or definitive account of the election. It is merely a forum – an opportunity for colleagues to reflect on this historic event. We hope that this publication will lead to a fruitful dialogue and we welcome further contributions through our various outlets, such as the GPSG Working Papers series, the series of Articles on our website and newsletter and, of course, our forthcoming events and panels.

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Graph:
BBC News

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Theofanis Exadaktylos

A fragmented and polarised political system

The results of last Sunday's elections in Greece reveal not only the deep fragmentation of the political system in Greece but also a polarised electoral environment within Greek society. Clearly the outcome of the elections signals the willingness of the Greeks to remain within the Eurozone and within the European Union structures, but also sends a stronger message domestically to the political establishment that the period of single-party governments is long gone. The electorate desires cooperation at different levels not only to overcome the crisis but also to build a safer future within the European architecture.

At the same time there is a strong momentum against the austerity measures that cannot be overlooked by the forthcoming government and this will pose a considerable threat to the reforms and the implementation of the required measures by the bailout agreement. This means that the new government will face strong opposition (even on the streets) and will have to seek a more general consensus but also, push forward an agenda of renegotiation of the memorandum with the Troika.

There are a number of dimensions that we need to take into consideration regarding the outcome of the vote. This repeat election massaged the numbers in terms of seats in order to allow a government to emerge that is pro-bailout and pro-Europe; in this sense the people gave an answer as to what type of government they want: one that builds on cross-party cooperation. Perhaps the politics of fear worked there, but at the same time the strong support for the Radical Left (SYRIZA) reveals that there is a good chunk of the population that was not afraid of the unknown. This reveals the deep economic recession and pessimism that roams the population, in the sense that people feel they have nothing else to lose. At same time it uncovers new cleavages within society, most notable among the center-periphery and young-old in terms of their voting preferences and experiences of the crisis.

Finally, there is a strong international dimension to all this. There was worldwide pressure on the electorate to 'vote in the correct way' as perceived externally. This was apparent in the polarization between the pro-bailout and anti-bailout camps: the intervention in the last few days (cf. the statements by European and international leaders as well as the articles in the international media, especially from Germany) was quite direct. In the Greek mentality, this can work both ways: on the one hand, it can convince Greeks to vote in a certain way to protect the international image and credibility of the country; and on the other hand, it may have pushed certain voters to vote in a radical way with the message of domestic sovereignty and ownership of the electoral result.

Looking at the results themselves there are certain notable findings:

New Democracy managed to get close to 30% effectively gaining enough seats in parliament so as to require as few coalition partners as possible. Yet, effectively, the New Democracy leader is seeking a wider consensus to ring-fence the position of the country within the EU and to have enough backing to push for a renegotiation of some of the terms of the bailout agreement.

SYRIZA managed to increase its percentages to a number that can be easily mishandled. Now, the electorate will begin to treat them as a party that has the potential to govern (rather than a marginal anti-systemic party). We have seen a change of rhetoric from the previous

election to this one which signals their desire to capture the middle ground in Greek politics. However, they have chosen the path of remaining in opposition consciously as they are also afraid to get in the driver's seat with untested practices and too much rhetoric that may not be easily translated into policy.

PASOK managed to retain more or less its previous percentages still losing out and still facing an overly unfair share of the blame for the current situation. At the same time, we see that this is now an unprecedented opportunity for the party to make a clean break with the past and reorganize to reflect the new dynamics within society. After all, this is the truly middle-class party and most of its previous voters have defected to SYRIZA. This will be the target of its leader.

KKE the Greek communists saw their support diminishing, which also alludes to their loss of touch with societal needs.

Independent Greeks lost considerable ground especially towards New Democracy but also to the far right, which also reveals that this party that emerged out of the blue has lost its initial momentum and will perhaps experience declining results, a kind of firework effect.

Democratic Left maintained its share of the vote and appears to be an interesting new feature in Greek politics as a left wing party that incorporates values of social democracy under a European context, and which will perhaps act as a balancing coalition partner to austerity measures.

LAOS has vaporized mainly due to the rise of the Golden Dawn party of the extreme right. The neo-fascist **Golden Dawn** is now incorporating voters on issues of illegal migration and racism, which are newly legitimized phenomena on the Greek political system. What their results allow us to assume in a safe way is that they have now solidified their footing in parliament despite all the negative portrayal by the media and all the incidents that took place in the meantime (punching of a communist MP on live television, racial attacks on immigrants etc.). This is indeed the phenomenon that in my opinion is most surprising. However, it has also become the reality in Greek politics and should be the one to watch out for.

So now what? In my opinion the new government will have a hard time in passing measures of austerity. It will face strong opposition on a daily basis from a number of different parties of the political spectrum left and right, making it hard to even conduct day-to-day operations. This means that the stability of the new government is at stake. The coalition may not last long but it needs to last until Europe manages a unified response to the crisis. At the same time, its life cycle will depend on the responses of Europe in terms of their flexibility to renegotiate the terms of the agreement, as well as the redesigning of the institutional architecture of the European project to reflect a stronger political union, especially as more and more countries require some form of bailing out, albeit at different degrees and for different reasons.

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The Europeanization of the Greek party system

Sunday's election result consolidated some of the trends observed on 6 May. Abstention was again at very high levels, and the number of female MPS (20%) remains disappointingly low. However, the protest vote of 6 May was this time replaced with a more conscious/decisive choice by the electorate who unequivocally called for a coalition government centred on New Democracy. It is up to the leaders of ND, PASOK and (possibly though not necessarily) the Democratic Left to form a long-lasting, stable and decisive government so as to bring to an end a tumultuous year in Greek politics.

Trends and Prospects:

The 17 June election consolidated a number of trends observed 6 weeks ago:

- a) that PASOK remains heavily penalized for its handling of the crisis and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. Its medium-term future remains highly uncertain and a lot will depend on the way it handles itself over the next few weeks. It is not certain that it will survive in its current form, as the multiple interest groups that used to compose its wide electorate have now departed en masse and have mainly moved to SYRIZA.
- b) that Golden dawn is here to stay, and that the 7% obtained on 6 May comprises a solid electorate that votes for the party consciously rather than to protest others. Its political future in the medium term appears assured as it has the potential to completely dominate the far-right political spectrum following the electoral collapse of LAOS and the uncertain future of the protest party "Independent Greeks".
- c) that abstention levels now comprise more than 30% of the electorate, and that these voters are unlikely to return to the ballot box any time soon.
- d) that electoral volatility is here to stay with about one-third of the electorate making their minds up on election day or (maximum) 15 days prior to election day. No party, including New Democracy and SYRIZA, can depend on the electorate's loyalty, and it is first and foremost the practical results of party conduct, in office and/or in opposition, that will determine the future of parties in Greece from now on. In that sense we are witnessing the Europeanization of the political system in conditions of uncertainty and instability.

Individual party assessment and prospects:

New Democracy won the election, and a large part of the centre-right returned to the fold following May 6th's embarrassing result. Former Foreign Minister Bakoyannis' return facilitated the win, as did the unprecedented salience of the vote. Its future as a mass party, however, is far from assured, not least because of the electoral volatility mentioned above. The way it handles the crisis from now on will be decisive in that regard: even modest economic recovery will allow the party to regain some of the lost trust, but mishandling the crisis may lead to a crisis as big as the one PASOK is now experiencing.

Apart from ND, **SYRIZA** also emerges stronger from this election. It remains to be seen, however, whether its meteoric rise will be consolidated, thus leading to a permanent transformation of the party system. Its choice to remain in opposition will help if the ND-led government fails to fulfil expectations of a return to growth and a decline in record

unemployment. But it is clear that, at least for the time being, the party can hardly count on half of its vote share of 27% as a core constituency committed to the party's programme.

The **Democratic Left** is another winner, who proved that a share of the electorate is ready to embrace a variant of social democracy closely approximating the European equivalent. It is small at the moment yet very influential in policy circles, and its future may become brighter depending on PASOK's choices and initiatives.

PASOK is facing a historical crossroads, as its electoral spine has been broken and its survival depends on being able to move to social democratic territory and denouncing its past. The possibility of working together with Democratic Left, whose social democratic credentials are slowly emerging on the political landscape, to make this transition is not to be excluded.

The **Communist Party** was heavily defeated and question marks over the leadership are likely to emerge. A change in political orientation is not likely in the short to medium term, however.

Independent Greeks will be under pressure from now on and their survival on the political landscape depends, inversely, on the performance of the new government.

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Shreds of hope for Greece, a relief for the Eurozone

The electoral win of the “pro Euro(pe) vote” cast shreds of hope for saving the country’s future in the Eurozone and in the EU. And for the vast majority of the electorate, the vote was a tough call.

The pre-election period, even though very brief, turned out to be intense. The political discussion was polarized around the centre-right New Democracy party and Syriza, the radical-left coalition. In other words, the choice was presented as one between the pro-bailout forces and the anti-bail-out rhetoric of Syriza, promising to abandon Greece’s commitment to austerity. Horrifying scenarios were abundant in the Greek media, warning the voters for an upcoming “catastrophe”. The possibility of a “no” vote caused near-panic in world markets, with analysts warning that the collapse of the euro would cost to the markets \$1 trillion.

As a result, the elections of June 17 turned into a “referendum” on whether Greece wants to stay in the Euro or not. Greeks opted for the first, as the fear for the worst was stronger than the anger for the past governments.

As the Greek electorate proved, the ideological polarization had a remarkable effect on voters’ willingness to deviate from one of the two options proposed. Academic research affirms that when party polarization increases, the number of viable policy alternatives offered to each group of party supporters is reduced. Thus, even though voters are dissatisfied with the mainstream parties, even if they should/would gladly change, voters will keep on choosing the same policy option. This was also the case in Sunday’s election, when the pro-bailout vote, represented by the mainstream parties, prevailed, even though the two main parties (New Democracy and Pasok) were mainly to blame for the economic collapse of the country according to the vast majority of the public opinion.

The mandate wasn’t clear. The punishment of mainstream parties, New Democracy and Pasok is obvious. Greek voters gave a clear message to the political leaders that they have to cooperate and form a strong coalition government.

The marginal results gave needed breathing space to the Europeanist Greeks, relief in the Eurozone and temporary alleviation from the markets’ pressure. Notwithstanding, the circumstances remain very critical and the country’s main economic indicators remain in red. Much has to change and that has to be done fast and efficiently. The formation of a fully functioning, strong coalition government is a must for buying some time, in order to have long delayed reforms implemented - rapidly and effectively.

Simultaneously, Europeans have to seriously consider changes to bailout terms for Greece and introduce a package of measures to promote growth. This is a prerequisite for a possible recovery of the struggling Greek economy. If austerity measures stay in place and there is no change in bailout repayments, it is very hard even for a strong coalition government to kick-start the economy and for Greece to avoid a “Grexit” in the long run...

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Back from the Brink? Greece's Last Throw of the Dice

Greece went to the polls on June 17th for its most critical election in decades. The two main contenders, the conservatives of New Democracy and the radical left Syriza fought neck-and-neck for pole position, which would bring them closer to forming a governing coalition.

New Democracy came to represent stability and predictability for an uncompromised future of Greece within the Eurozone. Syriza, on the other hand, represented hope and belief that an alternative to the draconian austerity measures upon which the EU/IMF bailout agreement is conditional is possible and should be pursued. Both rationales hold much resonance among the Greek people, who are worried about the consequences of a Euro exit but simultaneously suffer from austerity fatigue after two years of unfruitful sacrifices. In the end, New Democracy claimed victory with a small but clear lead over Syriza. Both parties significantly increased their electoral share by over 10 percent compared to the May 6 election, which is indicative of the degree of polarisation that preceded this campaign. Meanwhile, the vote for smaller parties was squeezed but did not prevent the ultra nationalist right-wing group Golden Dawn from holding its share and entering Parliament – the sub plot to this election.

The main story however, which kept global audiences hooked in anticipation for the result is that the pro-austerity camp has prevailed, albeit marginally. This will bring a sigh of relief to European leaders, none more than Angela Merkel, who were alarmed about the prospect of seeing the Greek bailout agreement torn up, as suggested by some forces within Syriza.

New Democracy and its leader Antonis Samaras still needed the support of at least one more party, since it was not able to secure a majority of its own in Parliament. Unlike May, however, the formation of a governing coalition was rather straightforward. At minimum, a coalition with Socialist and pro-austerity Pasok would have sufficed. To increase the political legitimacy and strength of the coalition, however, the participation of at least one of the anti-austerity parties was sought and achieved with the support of the Democratic Left. The significance of this is that the voice of a majority within Greece that oppose the draconian measures will now be heard in government and will contribute to any negotiations about softening the terms of the bailout agreement.

Greece is thus exiting a period of political instability with a strong -at least in numbers - governing coalition, avoiding scoring an own goal, which the inability to form a government for the second time in six weeks would have equated to. The road to economic recovery, however, remains thorny and long and more austerity alone is unlikely to be politically, socially and economically sustainable.

In a sluggishly changing Europe, Greece rolls the dice for possibly one last time, needing to convince self and others that it is able to change itself and implement the required reforms needed to pave the way for a brighter future. The key now is for government and opposition to embark on a collective, measured and systematic effort at home to manage the crisis, encouraged by developments elsewhere in Europe which favour a rethink of the overall strategy.

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Greek Elections 2.0: Party System Reloaded?

The most recent election battle fought in Greece on Sunday, June 17 2012, showed that the process of political realignment is underway and is intensified compared to the previous election of May 6. The June election was characterized by two events: a) the rise of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) as a mass party to the status of the Official Opposition, and b) by the reconstruction of the party of New Democracy as a special coalition of far-right and centre-right forces and its victory at the elections.

The rise of Syriza to the status of official opposition is an extraordinary political phenomenon since it was achieved within a period of few months, a fact that seems to be exceptional in the political history of Europe. The rise of Syriza is the product of a social movement for change from below that diminished older political forces (e.g. Communist Party of Greece - KKE) that could not interpret the political and social conjuncture's signs as opportunities for the development of a political strategy aiming at the formation of a progressive left government and the building of a large supportive social coalition aiming at the abolition of the memorandum and its implementing laws through the parliamentary procedures.

On the other hand, New Democracy managed to build an unsteady electoral coalition by absorbing into its ranks a great part of centre-right and far-right forces that had an independent presence in the elections of the 6th of June. The Democratic Alliance led by Mrs. Dora Bakoyianni suspended its operation and some of its senior cadres were included in the New Democracy's ballots. MPs and other cadres were transferred from far-right Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) to New Democracy. Centre-right political groups, such as the coalition "Drasi-Dimiourgia Ksana-Fileleftheri Symmakhia" (Action, Creation Again, and Liberal Alliance) that ventured contesting the election against both New Democracy and SYRIZA in the name of combating "populism" were diminished. LAOS also suffered a similar defeat.

The once powerful Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) kept losing votes and MPs, albeit with less intensity this time and still holding the role of party with "blackmail potential" (in Giovanni Sartori's terms a party which may due to its number of MPs help set up and / or overthrow a government). The Communist Party lost this potential due to its refusal to exploit the changing structure of political opportunities by participating in a progressive left government with the task of overthrowing the Memorandum, despite the fact that in 1989 KKE took advantage of this potential; the party co-governed first with New Democracy in a temporary government and then with New Democracy and PASOK in a three-party government which had passed through the parliament some pro-labour laws such as the law 1876/1990 that established free collective bargaining.

Independent Greeks, a right wing anti-memorandum political party led by Panos Kammenos (ex-MP for New Democracy) was abandoned by a quarter of its voters who voted either for New Democracy or for SYRIZA. Democratic Left, a reformist party which was part of SYRIZA until two years ago, stabilized its share of votes despite the fact that some of its previous voters cast their votes to SYRIZA thanks to latter's consistency on the anti-memorandum stance. Ecologists-Greens, ANTARSYA (radical left), "Can't Pay, Don't Pay" Movement and other Maoist and Trotskyist political groups either lost a big proportion of their previous election voters in favour of SYRIZA or did not contest the election.

The dark side of this election showed that neo-Nazi, anti-immigrant Golden Dawn stabilised its political and social presence in the country unleashing deadly violence against immigrants. Almost daily there are violent incidents perpetrated by members of Golden Dawn or

sympathisers; many of these incidents are not reported to police due to the threat of further violence against the victims. Moreover, sections of the police are suspected of covering the members of Golden Dawn. We must note here that in both elections this year in the special polling stations for police staff, Golden Dawn's share of the vote exceeded 50%.

In terms of electoral sociology Syriza gained working class votes and New Democracy gained votes from the upper classes. For example, in the Municipality of Ekali with very rich residents New Democracy gained 70.01 % of the vote and SYRIZA only 6.54% of the vote. Similar was the pattern of the vote throughout the rich residential suburbs in the main urban areas, e.g. in the municipality of Filothei-Psyhiko New Democracy gained 51.48 % and SYRIZA gained 15.86%. On the contrary, in working class municipalities of such Aigaleo (Athens) and Keratsini-Drapetsona (Piraeus) Syriza gained 37.15% and 37.23% of the vote while New Democracy gained 19.10% and 17.29% respectively. Finally, we ought to mention that Syriza gained a very high share of votes in Attiki and Thessaloniki and other urban districts while New Democracy in rural areas.

In what direction is the party system going? These elections brought down the party system as we knew it, which is a two-party system with cartel party features (in terms of R. Katz and P. Meir's "cartel party theory" the catch-all parties invade the state, finding there a new source of privilege and a new means of ensuring their own survival). New Democracy and PASOK still share these features but the system is under reconstruction through the process of political realignment. Real policy differences between New Democracy and PASOK on the side and Syriza on the other side convinced a great number of the voters that there are alternative policy platforms expanding thus the available choices and enhancing democracy. Syriza is a sui generis political party which combines characteristics of traditional left parties (socialist ideology, access to working classes), left libertarianism (welfare state for all, expansion of human, political and social rights, libertarian ways of thinking and living), radicalism (direct democracy, self-management) and social movements (feminism, ecologism, LGTB etc). It must be noted that SYRIZA was preferred by the majority of voters from 18 to 54 years old (18-34 years old 33.0%, 35-54% years old 34.0%) while the older voters (above 55 years old) preferred New Democracy by 39%, PASOK by 17% (18-34 years old 6%) and Syriza by 20%. This means that the system is being transformed into a relatively polarized pluralist system expressing a highly fragmented society along not only socio-economic class lines but also along age divisions.

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GREEK ELECTIONS

Main Parties	6/5/2012	6/5/2012	17/6/2012	17/6/2012
	Seats	Votes %	Seats	Votes %
New Democracy	108	18.85 %	129	29.66%
Coalition of the Radical Left - SYRIZA	52	16.78 %	71	26.89%
Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement PASOK	41	13.18 %	33	12.28%
Independent Greeks	33	10.61 %	20	7.51%
Communist Party of Greece - KKE	26	8.48 %	12	4.50%
Golden Dawn	21	6.97 %	18	6.92%
Democratic Left	19	6.11 %	17	6.26%
Ecologists-Greens	0	2.93 %	0	0.88%
Popular Orthodox Rally	0	2.90 %	0	1.58%
Democratic Alliance	0	2.56 %	0	0
ANTARSYA	0	1.19%	0	0.33%

Incapable of change, unable to hope

Election results can only be interpreted when one takes into account the specific political assumptions that define each election process. The basic political assumption underlying the 17th June elections in Greece was one of a referendum-like nature. Greek society was called upon to choose -in what was termed the most critical elections since 1974- with not one, but two guns pointed at their heads. On the one hand, there was the threat of finding themselves out of the Eurozone and on the other the certainty that they would still have to suffer the hardships of additional unjust measures, bursting unemployment and a standstill development. The prospect of both options resembles, for many Greeks, the prospect of choosing between a sudden and a slow death.

Uninspired by their political leaders and unable to identify with party proposals the Greek electorate finally opted for the latter. It felt that it had to halfheartedly opt for something, only to avoid the worst. Given the lack of sophisticated political education, it was certain that the Greek electorate would find itself caught up in this dilemma. Democracies of high sophistication, however, do not allow room for dilemmas. This is because meaningful democracy presupposes that the electorate possesses sharp judgment that allows it to clearly and calmly read between the lines of the dilemmas set forth. And this is not the case for Greece, as the electorate has been nurtured in a shortsighted clientele-like political orientation and practice for over forty years now.

As a result, it was a given that, like political dilemmas causing polarisation, polarisation would in turn cause intra-party rallying and this in turn would only reaffirm the predominance of political parties already well in place. The weakening, thus, of the traditional parties according to the May 6th election result, has not been reaffirmed. The leftward turn seems to be paradigmatic not of a structural shift of the otherwise deeply conservative and fearful-of-change Greek society, but rather of an opportunist trend to avoid the hardships caused by the Greek bailout.

Additionally, the fact that the fascist party maintained its percentages is not being attributed to the embracing of the fascist ideology by almost 500.000 Greek citizens, but to the lack of state welfare policies and practices that the party has successfully exploited. The results manifest, thus, a society at a loss, deprived of political thinking, ideological orientation and in confusion as to how to react about their political, social and financial prospect.

Admittedly, what was certainly missing in these elections was the element of hope for the future. Not unsubstantiated hope but a well-defined prospect of development and regeneration; the certainty that problems will be handled not in the usual ways of the clientelistic system but in the sense of learn-from-past-mistakes attitude. The result is not therefore promising for the Greek society - neither for the Greek state as a whole. And this does not only have to do with whether Greece will find itself into or outside the Eurozone in the near future. It has to do with the fact that every election has to serve as a step towards achieving political maturity and change. And meaningful change would not only coincide with the replacement of the 'old' with the 'new' but of the 'rotten' with the 'fresh'. This was not visible at all in these elections.

Indeed, it takes a long time for a paradigm to change. It will take more than one or two elections to really attest whether there is change, whether the change is structural or whether Greek society will relapse to the familiar practices of clientele mentality. But in any case,

political decisions made under the state of fear for one's own and collective future, are certainly not conducive to structural social and political change.

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7 **Dimitris Rapidis**

Polarisation and uncertainty

The result of the ballot box in the second round of the Greek elections on 17th June 2012 leaves some clear but mainly some unclear messages. The electoral rise of Syriza mainly in the urban areas of the country clearly shows that the middle class is now attached to this political formation which comes to substitute PASOK as the party that expresses the centre and centre-left voters of the political spectrum. ND gained the first place increasing its share of the vote by almost 10 % and setting itself as the leading political power in Greece. PASOK retained its share, the Communist Party and Independent Greeks lost significant ground, whereas the extreme right party of Golden Dawn gained for the first time relatively strong parliamentary representation against the odds.

These are the clear messages. But what about the unclear messages? Unfortunately there are overriding the first ones.

Firstly, the weak electoral win of ND against Syriza shows the deep division of the electorate regarding what policy Greece should follow against the austerity measures and the bailout plan. This division was meticulously manoeuvred by the media which, during the election campaign, were constantly over-mentioning that Syriza was willing to set Greece outside the Eurozone. So the dilemma was between choosing to stay or leaving the Eurozone. This dilemma was by its nature invented as Syriza was never supporting the exit of Greece. This trick ultimately determined the result at large.

Secondly, the tremendous electoral rise of Syriza was critically explained as the will of voters to condemn both ND and PASOK for their decision to implement harsh austerity measures. Yet the results of June 17th show that ND and PASOK can form a coalition government equal of the one ruling Greece under the premiership of Lucas Papademos between November 2011 and May 2012. So assuming both parties form a coalition government nothing is essentially changing and the mess and stagnation that occurred during the electoral period would be nonsensical.

Thirdly, the entrance of extreme right in Parliament despite incidents of violence stemming from its candidates during the electoral period proves that a significant part of the Greek electorate has become either suddenly undemocratic or completely puzzled. This cannot be scientifically explained simply on the grounds that there is still confusion regarding the causes of deep economic hardship. Is it the presence of illegal immigrants that has brought Greece into this perilous situation both economically and socially, or the unjust austerity measures instead? The answer is still unclear in the eyes of many voters.

Fourthly, there is also a legitimate question wandering over the fate of Greece that has not been answered. All parties are talking about the need to reset and re-negotiate the terms of the bailout plan as it cannot be sufficiently implemented. But has any political leader guaranteed that the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank are willing to re-negotiate the terms? In other words, have any of our lenders

publicly expressed their willingness to re-negotiate the bailout plan? We have not seen or heard anything of the sort. So why all parties were overstating this if no clear sign has emerged?

It finally seems that, once more during an election campaign, the public has not been fully informed. And given that eventually we have achieved to bring parties close to the formation of a coalition government, another question is arising: if not even now, when will the public be finally an equal interlocutor of the possibly hidden discussions streaming the doors and offices of the political leaders in Greece and Europe?

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**Section B: The day after tomorrow:
Prospects for the new government and for the political system**

8

Vasilis Leontitsis

Learning to co-operate

After the May and June elections, Greece is about to enter a new political era. The two-party system has collapsed, taking with it the ability of a single party to form a government on its own. This is officially the end of Metapolitefsi; the political period in Greece that started with the restoration of democracy in 1974.

The Greek voters have demanded for coalition governments and the political parties in the country have been forced to accept it. The new government that has just sworn in Athens is supported by three parties: New Democracy (centre-right), PASOK (socialists) and the Democratic Left (centre-left). More importantly, it is not restricted either temporally or in scope. Hence, the three parties will have to learn to co-operate in a number of issues and put aside their minor or major differences.

This could be a novelty for Greece. The short-lived coalition governments in 1989-1990 failed miserably, since it was possibly far too early for the political parties to abandon confrontational behaviours that have infested Greece's politics since its independence. In the end, the country reverted to the status quo ante with PASOK and New Democracy alternating in power. What has now changed is both the internal and external conditions.

Externally, the country is the weakest link in a financial crisis that has affected most of the Western World. The economic crisis has grown into a political and social crisis unprecedented since World War II. Internally, a closer look at the recent results reveals an important qualitative difference. In 1989, the two major parties accounted for more than 80% of the votes. In May 2012, they accounted for approx. 35% and in June, after an intense election period, they accounted for 56%. In 1989, the party with the most votes was denied parliamentary majority, because of the electoral law. In 2012, the first party did not achieve parliamentary majority, despite a really favourable law. Hence, the Greek political parties need to co-operate, in order not only to pull resources and face a destructive, multi-faceted crisis, but also because they have no other option, after the recent election results.

The learning process will be a long one. However, this is possibly the only path out of stagnation. The Greek political parties and society have to re-learn the values of co-operation, respect for the other, and above all the importance of dialogue in achieving positive outcomes. The recent results are pushing towards co-operation. At the same time, the strengthening of the far-right party (Golden Dawn) and the strong, polarising language used between the May and June elections show that confrontational behaviours are not to disappear overnight. The conditions have changed, but what about the attitudes of the political establishment in Greece?

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The dying breath of an ageing political system

A person who has no knowledge of Greek politics, other than what he or she learns from the media, may conclude that the outcome of the Greek elections guarantees the European course of the country. The pro-bailout conservative party of New Democracy has won, and is about to form a coalition government which will make sure that Greece will stay in the Eurozone at any cost. The Grexit, which could prove disastrous for the Eurozone, has been averted. This couldn't be further from the truth. There are at least two things to consider.

Firstly, when the Papademos coalition cabinet was formed in November 2011, it enjoyed the support of three parties and it received a vote of confidence from an impressive 255 MPs out of 300. However, when the second bailout agreement was brought to the parliament three months later, it received only 199 votes in favour. The coalition cabinet lost the support of 56 MPs within three months, largely because of the second bailout agreement and the related austerity measures. This is particularly surprising since Greek MPs have been notorious for toeing the party line.

How can one expect that a government supported by the 179 MPs of New Democracy, the social democratic PASOK, and the left-of-the-centre Democratic Left, in comparison to the 255 seats of the Papademos cabinet, can survive for more than a few months? The issue is further complicated by the fact that checks and balances has never been a strong point of Greek politics. Unless there are significant changes to the austerity policy, it seems very unlikely that this government will stay in power for long.

Let's suppose that the electoral results actually indicate that most of the Greek electorate is supportive of the bailout agreements. However, there's a much more important set of facts coming into play: who actually voted in favour of the pro-bailout parties? According to the exit poll data presented on a recent public event by professor Elias Nikolakopoulos, a leading figure in Greek electoral studies, it seems that the majority of New Democracy's and PASOK's supporters are found among the elderly. In particular, among voters older than 55, New Democracy received 40% of the vote, PASOK received 19%, and the main anti-bailout party, the radical left SYRIZA, is third with 18.5% of the vote. On the contrary, among all age categories under 55, SYRIZA received more than 30% and has a 10% lead over New Democracy, while PASOK's share of the vote drops to single digit numbers.

The exit poll data also indicate that SYRIZA has a big lead among the private sector workers and the unemployed, while New Democracy is dominant among the pensioners and the farmers. Moreover, SYRIZA is stronger in urban areas and among the voters who have received tertiary education, while rural areas are the strong point of both New Democracy and PASOK. The elderly, farmers, pensioners... are these the supporters of the pro-bailout parties, that guarantee the European future of Greece? There's something quite wrong here.

In fact, it is clear that there are at least two Greeces. One includes the elderly, who would rather live the rest of their lives in a familiar and stable environment. The other is composed by young and educated people, who had enough with the austerity policy and the parties of the status quo, and want to try something different.

It is obvious that the pro-bailout parties of New Democracy and PASOK, which dominated Greek politics during the past three decades, are dying - both metaphorically and literally. This was not a victory of the political forces that stand for European ideals, but rather the dying breath of an ageing political system. The Greek political system is changing, and parties such

as SYRIZA are on the rise. Add the durability of the extremist far-right Golden Dawn, which is also particularly powerful among the young, and you get a highly unpredictable and potentially explosive political environment.

In the short term, it's almost certain that new elections will take place within the year; chances are that they will be easily won by SYRIZA. On the long term, no one can tell what may happen. One thing is certain: after looking into these facts, no reasonable person can claim that the Eurozone was saved.

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10 Theodore Chadjipadelis

The 40 days of confinement should not be wasted

The result of the May 6th election has proven to be unmanageable for Greece's political parties. Stunned by the low vote shares and unexpected results of "one use" parties and the "one time" vote, they failed to form a government based on that result. Almost 48% (summing New Democracy, PASOK, Democratic Left and liberal parties) wanted the country to proceed in the direction of changes in the bailout agreement and ensure the progress of the country in the Eurozone. The embarrassing result made them proceed with a subsequent election as the possibility of forming a coalition government is something foreign to the Greek political tradition.

The May 6th result was a shaking for all. Almost one third of people voted the forces of populism. We had elections in 40 days, with Independent Greeks losing 3%, the Communist Party 4% and the share of those who voted for parties that did not pass the 3% parliamentary threshold declining from 19% to just 6%. Thus, ND and SYRIZA took about another 10% each. Is the situation manageable? Political parties have finally become adults. I have to note that the formation of government is a separate issue to the negotiation of the memorandum with our partners. Most people decided to vote that we must remain in the negotiations and try for the best. In this national objective both the government and the opposition have a distinct role. Like in other countries –e.g. Cyprus- where political leaders have to deal with existential questions beyond domestic politics, so must our political parties rise above their circumstances and offer each of their part in this national effort.

That means that the new government must take into account that the result requires consultation without bitterness. The opposition should also understand that 27% is no majority and that respecting the will of citizens is the primary element of democracy. The phenomenon of one-use-party and the one time vote will punish anyone who does not respect the will of the majority. At last the country must be stabilized to overcome "childhood" illnesses - to proceed with reforms. Theoretically, everyone wants to have an effective mechanism for collecting taxes before discussing the highest tax rate. The 40 days of confinement should not be wasted. Tomorrow, the parties have to overcome themselves. Neither is easy or very likely.

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Time to Run the Country...

The second round of the Greek elections in 2012 during the ongoing economic and social crisis was not less historical than the previous one. This time citizens seemed to vote by putting forth their logic rather than their indignation based predominantly on the menace of a “Grexit” from the euro zone.

Key messages

The main message of last Sunday’s elections was clear; Greeks want to be part of the EU and of the Eurozone as the percentage of the pro-European political parties gathered almost 50% (New Democracy, PASOK, Democratic Left) with New Democracy carrying the day (29,66%). However, at the same time, they want less austerity as the percentage of SYRIZA (26,89%) indicated and gained the second place overthrowing PASOK (12,28%) to the third one. The other political parties either pro- or against- euro (Independent Greeks, Democratic Left and Communist Party) found themselves with diminished percentages of votes, as the voters preferred to strengthen the two dominant parties of the debate and not to risk a third round of elections.

Another interesting observation is that the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn, achieved the exact same result as in the previous elections (7%) despite the violent attack of its spokesperson against a female MP in front of the cameras just a few days before the elections, and the presentation of their extreme theses in the media. This phenomenon illustrates that the argument of some who claimed that those who voted for the Golden Dawn the first time on May was due to either ignorance or punishment to the political system is not valid. In fact, we have to investigate in a deeper fashion this tendency.

In my opinion, this result stems from the long-standing issue of illegal migration and the subsequent criminality. At that point, Golden Dawn delivers social services that police or other state institutions do not and somehow aims to “restore the order”. Thus, not all of its voters identify with their ideology. Yet, it is a really worrying phenomenon not only because it clearly underscores the inefficiencies of the state, but also it cultivates a xenophobic attitude. After all, the sharp increase of incidents of blunt violence against immigrants is not random. Still, a question arises; if Golden Dawn aims to protect Greek citizens from criminality where police cannot, what happens in cases when criminals are Greek?

Priorities

Firstly, we need a serious, accountable and capable government. New Democracy, PASOK and Democratic Left are about to form a coalition government. The main dilemma is whether to form a government of technocrats and politicians that are not “burnt” by politics or one of well-established politicians who know the “game” well. In my eyes, we have no time to waste playing political games and putting in position of government people who will govern with short-term horizon and will value higher the individual political cost than the national one. Secondly, concerning the re-negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the international partners, it is necessary to have representatives who will combine strong technical expertise and solid experience in multilateral negotiations. They should be able to convince that persistent contractionary fiscal policies will not yield the expected results in the already agreed timeframe, especially after such a prolonged electoral period and with such a strong opposition.

Thirdly, the aforementioned argument in order to be convincing should be coupled with decisiveness to reform in fast pace the malfunctioning structures of the state. Creating the necessary institutional environment that will be attractive to investments and entrepreneurship, tackle persistent tax evasion and constructing a fair taxation system, strengthening our comparative advantage- the shipping industry-, reinitiating the construction of a production base, and reducing the enormous public sector by establishing a system of evaluation of performance are only few of the steps that the state could take.

However, one should keep in mind that reforms are not easy and cannot be realized without cost and discomfort. Yet, they are vital, if there is to be a horizon of recovery in the near future that will bring a leap of the so much needed faith and hope.

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12

Julie Kolokotsa

Did we really need the June election?

On the face of it, Sunday's election results do not look substantially different from those just weeks ago in Greece – no party won an outright majority. No other party apart from the “usual suspects” (New Democracy, PASOK and Democratic Left) is willing to enter this pro-bailout government. Nor did the campaign look substantially different from those of the past at least in the eyes of foreign viewers – few details were offered, candidates presented themselves in simplistic, populist terms as the only hope for the future.

Perhaps the starkest was Antonis Samaras' New Democracy (ND) claim that a vote for Alexis Tsipras of SYRIZA was a vote to return to the drachma. It's an interesting about-face for Samaras who is now claiming to be the responsible, safe choice to keep Greece in the Eurozone just months after his centre-right popular party refused to support the bailout agreement signed by the Greek government (PASOK), the EU and the IMF. Samaras' strategy appeared to bank on the hope that voters are short on memory and long on fear of a Eurozone exit.

Samaras' strategy is no surprise given that SYRIZA's rise from fringe (4% in 2004) to prominence (26.9% on 17 June) represents a shake-up to the establishment. SYRIZA - a fractious coalition of 12 radical left groups - effectively gave ND a run for its money and nearly even came in first. Given unemployment of over 22% and youth unemployment of around 50%, and rising public discontent with the austerity measures, this is hardly surprising. In fact, it effectively means over ¼ of Greeks who cast their ballot voted for a genuine change from the two-party alternating government game that has ruled Greece for over 30 years. Their wish was that People Power would really challenge People in Power. SYRIZA was the only party able to leverage this sentiment and its goal was to change the rules of the game of politics in Greece outright.

SYRIZA's rise has already bore fruit: it forced PASOK and ND to change the nature of the austerity debate and effectively admit that there is not much difference between them. ND finished first, allowing them to take advantage of a “reinforced proportionality” law (that they put in place when last in government) providing the first party 50 bonus Parliamentary seats. Yet even this boost together with PASOK and Democratic Left will not guarantee a lasting government in the face of unpopular austerity measures. The coalition gives the impression of

balance (left, center-left and center-right), but already shows signs of weak commitment as PASOK and Democratic Left declined to nominate ministers from their parties, fearing the political cost associated with those measures. Some like May Zanni of ND simply put this down to the fact that Greece has no tradition of coalition governing.

On a separate note, some commentators claim the rule of law lost out in this election as the extreme-right Golden Dawn party received nearly 7% of the vote. This is the party notorious for using Nazi salutes and swastikas, violently beating up dark-skinned immigrants, and most recently expressing its true colors when its spokesman, Ilias Kasidiaris (former special forces member), punched a female Communist Party representative on a live televised debate. Thodoris Georgakopoulos wrote in *The Guardian*: “The rise of Golden Dawn is an indication of our lawlessness...[which] is so pervasive that it is rendered imperceptible. We evade taxes, drive illegally...build houses in burned-out forest land, tolerate corruption, hate speech, racism and violence, and somewhere along the way, we forget that what we are doing is wrong.” Clearly the new government has a lot of work to do. Urgently.

Stay Tuned

So what now? With an uneasy feeling of déjà vu, we watch the same three parties from the May election (did we really need the June election?) form a governing coalition. As this goes to press, Greece is about to have its first elected government in 222 days. The stakes for Greece are high. Immediately after being appointed, the coalition will go straight into talks with the Troika (EU, IMF & European Central Bank) to determine if there is any room for maneuver on the Memorandum and to verify the current status of reforms as much progress was halted with the inconclusive elections of 6 May. The sense of urgency to make progress on reforms is great, but coalition partners will need to move carefully as they'll soon feel pressure from an emboldened opposition breathing down their neck, ready to hold them to account. It'll be an uneasy balancing act for the three party coalition. Watch this space.

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**Section C: Extremism is here to stay:
Understanding the continued success of the Golden Dawn**

13

Vasiliki Georgiadou & Lamprini Rori

Stable party strength in an unstable political landscape? The case of the Golden Dawn

Compared to the national ballot of May 6th, the 17 June 2012 election is marked by a three-kind variation regarding parties' electoral strength: parties who lost power (PASOK, ANEL, KKE); parties who increased their share of vote (ND, SYRIZA); and parties who maintained their forces (DIMAR, Chryssi Avgi). If one looks carefully at this quasi-typology of "loser", "winner" and "persistent", one figures out that not only it cuts across the traditional left-right axis, but also the new cleavage structures concerning the party stances vis-à-vis the bailout agreement and their commitment towards Greece's membership in the Eurozone.

Table 1. Influence of new cleavages on vote choice

Party	Pro/anti-bailout agreement	In favour/against stay in the Eurozone
SYRIZA	44%	12%
ANEL	11%	4%
KKE	6%	2%
Golden Dawn (Chryssi Avgi)	7%	3%
DIMAR	5%	8%
ND	16%	48%
PASOK	7%	18%

Source: Exit poll, Metronanalysis, 17.06.2012

Although the new cleavages are heuristic in interpreting why some parties collapsed and some other revived in the general election of the 6th May, the reasons that some political parties managed to endure, while others saw their power shrinking in the last election are more complicated and cannot be explained at first glance by the means of cleavage structures. To put it differently: both cleavages are important to electors who voted for parties that belong indifferently to all three groups of the "winners", "losers" or "persistent".

Alternative explanatory cues to the perseverance of the Golden Dawn need to be researched both in the demand (who voted for it) and the supply side (why is it voted for) of the political process. Even though the Golden Dawn and the ANEL voters share more or less the same socio-demographic features and electoral motives, the later lost almost one third of its voters compared to the 6th May share of vote. The Golden Dawn voters are young and middle-aged, mainly males. The party benefits a more or less equal support among most professional groups, to the exception of housewives and pensioners who are less likely to vote for it. Half of its voters express proximity to the party; a quarter of them chose this organization in order to exert a strong opposition, whereas among voters who want to punish politicians, the Golden Dawn voters come only second after the voters of SYRIZA (Exit poll, Metronanalysis, 17.06.2012). Hence, the variance in the socio-demographic profile of the Golden Dawn electorate shifts our exploration from the demand side to the supply.

The Golden Dawn increased its power in 26 out of 56 regions, whilst losses over 1% were only marked in one region. It remains very strong in its strongholds, which are mainly urban areas (1st region of Athens, Attika, 2nd of Thessaloniki, 1st and 2nd of Pireus), as well as smaller urban, semi-urban areas and rural areas (Argolida, Aitolioakarnania, Veotia, Evia, Ilea, Imatheaia, Kastoria, Kefallonia, Kilgis, Korinthia, Lakonia, Messinia, Fthiotida), some of which coincide with the old strongholds of the pro-monarchist, authoritarian, nationalist right of the 1970s. Its territorial diffusion is a *fait accompli*, since it concentrates more than 3% of the vote in all regions but the one of Lasithi.

The electoral persistence of the Golden Dawn is due to the structures of political opportunity that it managed to create, firstly, by expanding its organizational presence in the strongholds of the old far right of the first post-authoritarian years, as well as in those of the new far right (LAOS); secondly, by instrumentalising the issues of immigration and nationalism. Its anti-bailout stances do not offer a prompt explanatory indicator to its electoral success, since the ANEL, which also expresses strong anti-bailout positions suffered serious transfers towards ND.

Common wisdom suggests that the unprecedented rise of the Golden Dawn is stemming from factors related to the demand-side, as well as others related to the external supply; in other words, the consequences deriving from the rapid increase of immigration flows and from the economic crisis. Without underestimating such interpretations, mainly serving to the initial electoral breakthrough of the organization, we emphasize the specific importance of the internal-supply dynamics for its electoral persistence, like the ideological penetration, the distinct collective identity and the very feeling of belonging, the use of violence and the means of political confrontation that it brings into play.

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The recent elections may have only postponed Greece's default and Eurozone exit

On June 17th the Greek electorate cast a pro EU vote by opting for the New Democracy party. So it looks like Greece will stay in the Eurozone, but for how long? Uncertainty still looms large. Despite New Democracy's success, anti-establishment forces also experienced electoral gains to a great extent confirming the trends of the previous election round. For now, default is on hold but not averted. Greece's place in the Eurozone and the European Union is still at stake, largely depending on the stability of the new coalition government and their ability to tackle corruption which is by and large the underlying cause of the failure of the austerity measures to produce viable economic solutions for Greece.

New Democracy increased its vote by 10 per cent, gaining 29.66%. This grants it a total of 129 seats in the Greek parliament (including 50 extra seats for coming in first place), which means that despite being the first party it is still unable to form a strong majority government. Having increased its number of seats from the previous round however gives it the ability to form a pro-bailout coalition government as together with PASOK's 33 seats they enjoy a Parliamentary majority.

However the results are far from stable as they confirm the trends of party system fragmentation, electoral volatility and the rise of anti-establishment forces. The sum of the anti-bailout vote is high; if we include the unclear stance of the left-wing Democratic Left (DEMAR) as anti-bailout, then that amount to over 50% of the vote. This confirms that the pro and anti-bailout cleavage still defines Greek politics, and that the electoral result is not as clear cut as some may think.

In the anti-bailout camp, the radical left SYRIZA also increased its support by 10 per cent, gaining 26.89% of the votes cast. It was the second party, only 3 per cent behind New Democracy. Increased support for SYRIZA meant losses from the entire left-wing camp, ranging from the mainstream PASOK to the communist KKE which lost almost half of its previous support gaining a mere 4.5%.

Similarly forces of the right rallied around New Democracy, taking away support from other right-wing parties, from the Independent Greeks who lost 13 parliamentary seats to the small liberal parties which remain without parliamentary representation. Worryingly however, the only right-wing party that did not experience any losses was the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn which received a disturbing 6.92% (compared to 6.97% in the previous round). They lost marginally in some constituencies, for example Corinth where they had received 11.98% of the vote in May, whereas now this fallen to 9.99%. But the losses are minor, and the fact that they have 3 seats fewer than the previous round is largely due to the electoral system.

This result came contrary to expectations and assessments that the Golden Dawn would decline, especially after an incident of violent behaviour on behalf of one of its MPs against a representative of KKE on national television. This raises the issue of the legitimisation of violence casting a shadow on the future of democracy in Greece- a country which prides itself for being a cradle of democracy, having fought fascism in the 1940s and overthrown its own junta in 1974.

The day after presents a new parliamentary configuration with the question of responsible opposition. On the one hand, much of the opposition consists of parties that are associated with radicalism and violence. The main opposition party SYRIZA has in the past often been

associated with violent anti-police demonstrations. The radical left motto "ΕΑΜ-ΕΛΑΣ-ΕΠΟΝ/ο δρόμος των λαών" alluding to the left-wing armed resistance during the Greek civil war reveals the underpinning violent and anti-establishment sentiments among the SYRIZA electorate. The maintenance of such politics is likely to fuel anti-bailout sentiments and increase instability.

On the other hand, for policies to be implemented successfully, opposition must present the coalition with viable alternatives that operate within the democratic process without recourse to violence and extremism. Even though SYRIZA is now not in a position to prevent the formation of a coalition between New Democracy, PASOK and DEMAR, it can affect its ability to govern and implement new policies. Will SYRIZA retain its anti-systemic elements by taking the debate to the streets or will it make an effort to become a responsible opposition party, which may consolidate its position in the party system? Already Aleksis Tsipras has been likened to Andreas Papandreou in the 1980s- the leader that made PASOK a main contender in the Greek two party system for decades.

The pro and anti-bailout cleavage conceals the core structural problems facing the Greek economy, i.e. the embedded clientelistic system of nepotism. The very debate detracts attention from a deeply flawed political system in which consensus is completely absent, and which is based on an elaborate network of favours. Austerity is bound to fail if it continues to be selective, absolving those associated with the corrupt political system. Political parties, anti-establishment or not, need to significantly reform their internal structures and composition, as many politicians associated with this clientelism are being recycled within different party configurations, thus remaining MPs, albeit with a different party.

Tackling these issues is what will determine the success of the bailout plan and austerity measures. It remains to be seen how long the coalition will last, whether Greece will plunge into more extremism, the extent to which they will be able to remain in the Eurozone, and the extent to which the situation in Greece will have a knock-on effect on the future of the Eurozone as a whole. Although the election results endorse the Euro, uncertainty remains.

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<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2012/06/21/greece-elections-postponed-eurozone-exit/>

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The rise of neo-Nazism should not be underestimated

The second round of Greek elections has sent many important messages to everyone concerned in Greece and Europe. The result of the election reflects a polarised society. We have witnessed the re-assurance of the emergence of the neo-Nazi ultra-right party of Golden Dawn as a significant political force.

A lot of experts and analysts have rushed after the May elections to underestimate Golden Dawn's success. They held that there is a lack of a coherent ideology upon which the electoral ascendancy of the party is based. Based on a farcical and cockeyed vision of its members, it was widely believed even after the May elections that the party had not gained any momentum in the Greek society.

What the result of second elections affirms is that we cannot underestimate anymore the rise of the Neo-Nazis in the country. After a successful political activism that has been carried out by the members of the party, the ultra-right Golden Dawn is the fifth political party in the Greek Parliament.

As with the origins and nature of the current economic crisis, the rise of neo-fascist parties is not a Greek phenomenon. Tragic incidents like Breivik's atrocities in Norway are just becoming more noticeable. However, there has been a durable electoral base of radical right-wing parties in a number of European countries, like France, Denmark and Austria.

Neo-liberalist austerity feeds these phenomena in two ways. On the one hand it enhances the social inequalities and on the other it brings a new type of 'democracy'. The current extreme and harsh economic and political conditions only facilitate the rise of this ideology. Nevertheless, the rise of ultra-right in Greece and all across Europe should be examined in depth taking into account also irresponsible immigration policies by EU along with the decline of the European welfare state.

European Union has long been acting as a Pontius Pilatus leaving Greece alone and unable to deal with this major issue. The lack of an articulated coherent responsible immigration policy in the European level has allowed the extremist voices to be heard.

The key message this election sends us is: we should stop turning a blind eye on this issue. If we cannot deal with this issue immediately, then sadly it is certain that the cancer cells will spread all around.

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The stabilisation of Greek nationalism

An important fact of the May 2012 elections was the tremendous rise of the far right, nationalistic party Golden Dawn which managed to obtain 6.97% of the vote. Although it was believed that the party's violent practices (e.g. hitting a representative of the Communists on a live show) would deter people from voting for it again, the percentage of the party has almost remained the same, at 6.93%, during the June electoral process.

Nevertheless, the true reasons of the party's rise must be foraged elsewhere. Indeed, the high level of criminality in certain regions, especially in Athens and the totally absent national policy for illegal migration, which inevitably leads to an accumulation of illegal entrances into the country, increased the sense of fear within society. The outcome is that many people ended up believing that Golden Dawn can put an end to this severe problem where all other political associations failed.

Another reason can be identified in the general conditions within Greek society. The economic slump and the number of people falling to the level of poverty in Greece is increasing month by month, in addition to the total absence of any perspective for growth or improvement. These trends enhance hatred within society. Social groups are almost pointing to each other as being responsible for the severe economic situation. In such a social environment targeting the weakest of the social groups appears as an easy "solution". As illegal immigrants are by default in a very hard position, they are furthermore faced with extremist behaviour on the part of some local citizens. This can increase the impact of a party which is based on the ideology of hatred, such as the Golden Dawn.

Even though Greeks do not seem to embrace the ideological background of Golden Dawn, their voting tenacity seems to approve the party's practices. Golden Dawn is not just a far-right organization but a party in Parliament. This fact evinces the high level of hate developed in society and may lead to tremendous rise in violence – this time under the mantle of "democratic legitimisation". The result will be an even deeper fracture of the social cohesion which now the Greek society cannot stand.

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**Section D: The politics of fear and misinformation:
Contrarian interpretations of the electoral result**

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Emmanuel Heretakis

A testing ground for disinformation and scaremongering

2012 has featured quite a number of surprises regarding Greek elections. The first general election was held on May 6th, and we should not preclude a third round, a few months after June's second election.

The first phenomenon one should note is the fragmentation in the number of parties elected (presently seven), along with the very significant decrease in votes for the – former - two main parties, New Democracy (ND) and PASOK. Single-party governments seem to belong to a remote past. This goes together with widespread public disenchantment with those two parties, which is the first act of a significant distancing for them, with observable implications in the close future. In the past, these two parties tried to collect votes by promising parts of the electorate either positions in the public sector or other favours. Now, since they are not in the position to offer something tangible, they can only cultivate sentiments of mass fear, joined with widespread distortion of other political platforms and outright lies, diffused with the help of the mainstream mass media.

Furthermore, the share of the vote of the only remaining Stalinist Communist party in Europe (KKE in Greek) decreased significantly and this may imply serious pressure for its present leadership to step down, only to be replaced by new senior party members. Furthermore, the nationalistic party of Golden Dawn kept its position by insisting on the ousting of immigrants as the major answer to the problems of the Greek society. This is, of course, a huge, massive simplification, in a society seriously affected by deepening financial, social, humanitarian, political and other woes.

Greece has been a testing ground for disinformation and scaremongering by both mainstream international and domestic mass media (for further information, see “Message to the BBC and assorted international media on this Greek Election day”, at yanisvaroufakis.eu/). The Greek people were voting between two different programs on how to survive within the Eurozone, between the discredited “establishment” line mostly proposed by the former two big parties and the recommendation of Syriza, a party of the (European) left (and not of the radical left), as was reported by the “knowledgeable” enlightened foreign and local journalists, being characterized as parrots by the vast majority of the Greek people.

This is tantamount to the creation of “a bubble within a bubble”, which will almost surely deflate in the forthcoming elections. “Propaganda and lies have short feet” according to a popular Greek saying.

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A Pyrrhic victory for the establishment

Antonis Samaras and his party, New Democracy (ND), won the elections of the 17th of June 2012 in Greece by receiving 29,66% of the vote. Its main opponent, the radical left coalition SYRIZA rose to second place with 26,89%, continuing an impressive upward dynamic (from 4,6% in 2009 to 16,78% in May 6th 2012). Yet, one cannot but ask the question: who was the real winner? To be sure, it's not that obvious. Was it ND? Was it SYRIZA? Was it the 'pro-bailout' or maybe the 'anti-bailout' political forces in general? Was it the Left or was it the Right in the broader sense? For most of the Greek newspapers and TV channels it was rather clear and by the next day of the elections they were celebrating with relief a victory of the 'pro-euro' or 'pro-bailout' political forces (namely ND, PASOK and DIMAR which have since formed a coalition government), together with international media.

However, this is a rather simplified picture, since SYRIZA is also a 'pro-European' force that has always expressed its commitment to Greece's participation in the Eurozone and the EU in general, with the crucial difference that this *should not be pursued at the cost of social destruction*. Nor is SYRIZA an 'extremist' party, like many commentators have unjustifiably suggested.

To put it as briefly and schematically as possible, SYRIZA represents an alternative radical-left political agenda which emphasizes democracy and collective/direct participation of citizens in the political domain as well as social justice, welfare provision, fair taxation and tolerance in the social. It also champions the nationalisation/socialisation and the collective control of banks and ex-public companies (service & utilities) in strategic sectors, as well as a radical 'top to bottom' redistribution of wealth in favour of the poor in the economic domain. That's neither 'extremism', nor 'populism' per se; on the contrary, that could be seen as a return to some of the core values of modern democracy's promise (in a socialist or even social-democratic perspective).

Yet, Europe's post-democratic state of affairs could only regard such a political project to reinvigorate mass participation in decision-making, to (re-)establish collective/social control over the banks and the financial system – and thus to regulate capitalism's anti-democratic or/and anti-social excesses – as a dangerous break with the neoliberal orthodoxy of 'one-way solutions', as an assault to the dominant 'managerial virtue' of technocratic governance. But since when are social justice, social control and wealth redistribution equivalent to 'populism', 'extremism' or 'economic destruction'? Wasn't this the political approach that saved the economies of many western democracies after the destruction of World War 2? Wasn't a kind of radical wealth redistribution and regulation over the market a core element of Roosevelt's 'New Deal' back in the '30's? Wasn't this mixture of policies that helped the US rise rather unharmed from a destructive phase of economic depression and war?

Today, if one takes really seriously what Angela Merkel and other European officials are advocating, it seems that the peoples of Europe can change their governments and choose to be governed by different parties, *but only as long as nothing ever really changes, only as long as the same policies are guaranteed to be implemented*. Every political disagreement, every radical opposition, every alternative is simultaneously stigmatized as 'irresponsible populism' or 'cheap demagoguery'; moral stigma and denunciation replaces political argument and the opponent becomes an enemy. But this resembles a 'decaf democracy', as Slavoj Žižek would say or maybe a 'postdemocracy' in Jacques Rancière's words. That is a state of democratic affairs which has abandoned the element of real choice and negates antagonism, alternative paths, or even the ever present possibility of radical change, 'a democracy after the demos'.

That means that everything is OK as long as everything stays the same, even if everything is collapsing around us (Isn't that what even the rather neoliberal Economist was also criticizing on the front cover of the issue of 9th-15th of June 2012?).

That's why ND's marginal victory was welcomed with such a relief by European elites, the media and the stock markets. It was interpreted as a sign that things will not really change and Greece is going to stay on the austerity path imposed by the so called 'troika'.

That is also why most of the Greek media throughout the course of the second consecutive electoral campaign (between May 7th and June 17th 2012), in an effort to hold back SYRIZA's upward dynamic, merely parroted ND and PASOK's side of the argument regarding the stakes of the polls by posing constantly blackmailing dilemmas to the electorate ('memorandum or complete destruction', 'austerity or chaos', 'inside or outside the EU', 'euro or drachma', 'ND or bankruptcy', and so on). It was really impressive to watch almost every channel and newspaper in Greece issuing daily warnings to the public that everything should be done the 'right way' (which also happens to be the Right-wing way) in order to secure the formation of a 'pro-euro' (which in fact means 'pro-austerity') coalition government to avoid a complete economic and social breakdown in the hands of the 'populist' SYRIZA.

Even the *Financial Times Deutschland* intervened with an editorial in Greek warning the Greek voters *not to vote for SYRIZA's dangerous demagogy!* ('Widersteht den Demagogen', *Financial Times Deutschland*, 14.06.2012 (<http://www.ftd.de/politik/europa/:wahlempfehlung-antistattheite-sto-dimagogo-widersteht-den-demagogen/70050480.html>)). So, we wouldn't exaggerate if we suggested that it wasn't really a fair fight, at least at the level of media coverage.

In this perspective, it is rather impressive that SYRIZA managed to get an extra 10% of the vote (which means an extra 600.000 voters) performing an amazing jump from 16,78% (a month before) to 26,89% of the vote. If SYRIZA's dynamic can be explained by the party's 'politics of hope' then ND's mere 'repatriation' of some of its traditional voters is due to its persistence on a '*politics of fear*' and 'scare tactics', which was also supported by most of the media. While SYRIZA advocated throughout the whole campaign a series of measures which would ease social pain and boost growth and employment on the basis of an alternative paradigm (yet to be proven wrong or right, but still possible), ND's campaign was mainly negative propaganda against SYRIZA (sometimes even libelous) and a storm of warnings to the public for a 'coming Apocalypse' in case of a victory of the left. ND's 'positive politics' regarding the country's way out of recession and social stagnation was nowhere to be found.

So, to conclude, what appears to be a victory for ND and the forces advocating the continuation (in one way or the other) of harsh austerity policies (PASOK-DIMAR), might as well soon prove to be but a mere 'pyrrhic victory'. And what's more disturbing is that it might prove a pyrrhic victory not only for those already deteriorating parties of a collapsing establishment (ND-PASOK), but also for Greek society as a whole, since the lack of alternatives seems to be directing significant parts of the electorate towards the neo-Nazi extremists of the 'Golden Dawn'. And that's a real danger for democracy.

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Reasons to be fearful

The encore of the Greek elections in June 2012 allows for paraphrasing the Ian Dury and the Blockheads' "Reasons to be Cheerful". Greeks have reasons to be fearful; they've been under the state of a fear cultivated in the last two years with the EU/IMF bailout memorandum and its dodgy installments; they were forced to respond to critical and false dilemmas, of which one prevailed: Eurozone and Europeans or ostracized poor and impoverished Balkan relatives?

Almost half of the electorate rejected the latter with the known results of a potential coalition: New Democracy (30%), PaSoK (12%), Democratic Left (6%) which sums up to a quasi-48%. SYRIZA never admitted a counter-European political orientation nor proclaimed a post-electoral strategy against the Euro-zone; yet, Alexis Tsipras seemed to incarnate an anti-European option because of his vigorous rhetoric against the memorandum's social cruelty; this resulted to a historical high of 27% for a reformist Left party. The patriotic "Independent Greeks" shrunk to a 7.5% while the neo-Nazis retained a 7% from the first election round. A historical low for the Communist Party 4.5% demonstrates their rather obsolete fixations.

The three afore-mentioned parties will join forces for a "national salvation" or "co-responsibility" government; but this raises the major question of this article: what is the contemporary conceptual content of *national*, what is the stake of *salvation* and what is *responsibility*?

"National" is a zealously -and exclusively- held characteristic of the neo-Nazis who want to save – to safeguard, to be precise - the country from any *self-proclaimed saviours*: New-Democracy, PaSoK or their allies. Independent Greeks also attribute to themselves the political feature of a party with a *national cause*. Yet, they are not consenting to the national salvation government, since they are against the memorandum's imposed austerity.

Such an entangling situation is confusing for any citizen, because it doesn't adequately address the question of why repeating the elections made approximately 40% of the electorate to abstain; nor does it define 'nation' and 'national'; it misleads people in understanding the significance and value of political and moral responsibility and fails to explain the official impotence in restructuring the public life and in constructing a rationally functional political regime and a democratic state.

The parties who want to rule (in) Greece cultivated the fear of social misery and demise and won. The party who wants to banish the immigrants and re-establish a racial homogeneity hardened its victorious, ruling and fearsome profile. The parties who will keep the country within the terrifying tight embrace of the bankers prevailed. It's only natural that some party has to keep the popular spirits high and combative, while the creditors, under the Deutsch conductor's baguette, will responsibly ask the national saviours to dance to an another Ian Dury's song: "Hit me with your rhythm stick".

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Georges Tassiopoulos

A battle of values

The June 17th parliamentary elections in Greece confirmed a deep change in electoral behaviour. This time the voters' choice cannot be explained by the Right/Left cleavage, but through the concept of cultural dualism (Diamantouros): the long standing struggle between western and oriental values. This was crystallized this time in Greece's continued role within the Eurozone, according to the wishes of Eleftherios Venizelos and Constantinos Caramanlis for Greece's full integration to European institutions.

At the same time, these elections confirmed once again, France's deep influence in the contemporary Greek politics: this explains, for example, why SYRIZA's leader, Alexis Tsipras asked to meet the freshly elected French President, who finally met PASOK's leader Evangelos Venizelos in Paris on May 22nd; as well as François Hollande's interview in the Greek television only days before the June 17th Greek parliamentary elections.

Finally, since June 18th the moment of truth has come for the Greek political establishment itself. As there is no more a place for populism, illusions and oracle Pythia's prophecies about imaginary "friends" and "allies", as well as for the "wait and see" attitude whose aim is that "change everything but change nothing". Strong political will and determination are necessary for the realisation of structural reforms not only in the field of public administration but also in the Greek society in order for the country to be able to stay in the Eurozone. The goal to achieve is Greece's real westernisation, rejecting at last the heritage of oriental and third world politics, for the benefit of the younger generations for the decades to come.

In any other case, the country's future will be uncertain. So there is no doubt that the "pro-euro" political parties of Right and Left have a golden opportunity in order to determine Greece's evolution at the beginning of the 21st century.

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The “Greek problem”: towards a new “model” of political philosophy

During the last few years, an international concern has been initiated. The cause of this concern is a new category of events that has, and continues to, structure due to the association of political and economic actualities with the social reality, an association that occurs on the crossroad of today’s triple crisis – political, social and economic. This new category of events triggers the discrepancy of modern political societies. As a result, the alteration of basic axioms of political philosophy has already been initiated. For instance, the axiom of “autonomous and autarchic states”: modern societies appear weak as opposed to the current international political, social and economic deviations, and, in parallel, the modern international socio-political and economic realities are venerable in modern states. In this context of interactive vulnerabilities, the reason behind the huge international interest in the Greek parliamentary elections of June 17th becomes clear.

An important element of this new issue in political theory and practice is the transformation of both the concept of risk, which formed the basis of state formation (a domestic risk, such as an interior political change, and/or an external risk, such as an offence from abroad) and the topology of *risk*, which is now common and requires common adjustments between the state and the international.

In this context, the “Greek problem”, the semantics of the recent elections and the post-election reality create a new “model” that is completely deferent to the “old model” and therefore able to fertilize a new perspective towards the common interest, along with an universally different perception of risk and its management, an attitude that is positive towards our evaluation of reality. And the reality is that during the transition from the “old model” to the “new” a deep global restructuring is been performed, which requires a new arrangement between politics, economy and society.

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